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UPI-68

CPYRGHT (LAOS)

VIENTIANE--A TOP LAOTIAN CABINET MEMBER INSISTED TODAY THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD DEMANDED THE RESIGNATION OF RIGHTWING STRONGMAN PHOUMI NOSAVAN AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD A LAOTIAN SETTLEMENT.

"I KNOW YOUR EMBASSY DENIES IT," THE CABINET MEMBER SAID. "BUT IT IS TRUE. WE'VE GOT IT STRAIGHT FROM OUR AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON."

THE CABINET MEMBER ASKED NOT TO BE IDENTIFIED.

"THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WILL NOT ADMIT IT BECAUSE THEY REALIZE THERE IS NOBODY TO DEFEND THE WESTERN CAUSE IN LAOS WITHOUT PHOUMI," HE SAID.

"BUT (U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS AVERELL) HARRIMAN HIMSELF ASKED PHOUMI TO GIVE UP," HE SAID.

5/25--PA 1150 AED

UPI-72

ADD LAOS, VIENTIANE (UPI-68)

THE U.S. EMBASSY HERE SAID: "THE UNITED STATES IS NOT DEMANDING THE RESIGNATION OF PHOUMI NOSAVAN FROM ANY POST."

BUT THE LAOTIAN OFFICIAL INSISTED THAT IT WAS TRUE BECAUSE "HARRIMAN HATES PHOUMI. NEITHER OF THEM LIKES THE OTHER."

THE LAOTIAN OFFICIAL DEMANDED OF A UPI CORRESPONDENT: "WHY DO YOU KEEP TALKING ABOUT A MAN WHEN IT IS HIS COUNTRY WHICH IS AT STAKE? WE WISH MISTER HARRIMAN WERE A LAOTIAN SO HE'D KNOW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT. HE THINKS HE IS SAVING A COUNTRY BY TRYING TO DESTROY A MAN."

5/25--PA 1157 AED